



May 31, 2006

MAPSA Testimony Regarding HB 4575 and HB 5709

Chair, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Michigan's charter public schools, I am here to oppose HB 4575 and HB 5709.

These bills, if enacted, would further disadvantage charter public schools, creating a greater "privilege" gap between charter school districts and traditional public schools.

Charter public schools are not allowed to levy millages or sell public bonds. By law, per pupil funding for charters is at or below the average of surrounding districts, *never* above. The Michigan Department of Education statistics from a year ago show the funding gap averages \$1,473 less per student for charter public schools than their traditional "host" districts. Preliminary information from the current year says the gap is already growing.

Yet, charter public schools build buildings, pay for capital expenses, pay competitive salaries and benefits and in many cases even pay property taxes back to traditional public schools all within a reduced per pupil funding amount.

This legislation gives traditional public schools new options to access property tax revenue for capital use purposes. Why should the state create a separate class of school districts; those that have funding privileges vs. those that do not?

Again, we urge you to **not** support HB 4575 and HB 5709.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Daniel L. Quisenberry  
President

P.S. I have attached some quick facts about charter school funding for background.

## Factual Information Regarding Charter Public School Funding

- Charter per pupil funding is at or below the average of surrounding districts, *never* above. The Michigan Department of Education statistics from a year ago show the “funding gap” averages \$1,473 less per student for charter public schools than their traditional “host” districts.
- Charter students are 55% African American, compared to a state average of 19%. The charter student body is 62% minority, compared to 26% in traditional schools — nearly 2.5 times higher.
- Major metro areas and their suburban edges are home to 81% of charters; these schools enroll about 88% of charter students.
- The Michigan Department of Education reports that 62% of charter schools (representing 80% of students) are organized in K-7/8/9 or K-12 configurations. Only 16% of schools (11% of students) are in exclusively elementary schools.
- Charters are not allowed to levy millages or sell public bonds. Most charters pay property taxes back to traditional districts.
- While traditional schools have buildings, buses, cafeterias, gyms and outdoor facilities all purchased at taxpayer expense, charter schools do not. Charters must start from scratch to establish their facilities.
- Charters provide increased services such as all-day kindergarten, foreign languages in the lowest grades, extended school days and years, enhanced individual attention and character education.
- Michigan charters lead traditional schools of every state in the ratio of teachers vs. other staff, according to the **National Center for Education Statistics. Michigan Department of Education** figures show that teachers represent 64% of total staff in Michigan charters. The state’s traditional public schools have the worst ratio of any state in the nation, at 45.2%.
- A traditional district’s millage and bond revenue remain untouched by charter schools.
- Charters can positively impact a community by providing educational options that attract and retain families, keeping property tax revenue in distressed areas.
- Of 216 operating public school academies, approximately a third (60 schools) have completely new facilities. More than half of the existing PSAs or (100 schools) have made significant renovations with no millage money or public bonding.

## **Recent MEAP Tests Confirms Progress of State's Charter Schools**

*-- Students in ethnic, economic and special needs subgroups outshine peers*

Analysis of 2005 MEAP results released last month shows charter public schools in cities across Michigan are helping students excel at levels greater than their peers. Consider:

- 53 schools — 24 percent of all charters — exceeded the state average on 10 or more tests. These schools are located in more than three dozen communities.
- In a comparison developed by the Michigan Department of Education, charter schools exceeded a control group of 18 “host districts” on 19 of 27 tests. Charters tied the host districts on three others.
- Charters in the city of Detroit topped the local district on 20 of 27 tests. Notably, charter students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades are ahead of their peers in all subjects.
- Further, more than half of the 39 elementary/middle school charters in Detroit exceeded the state average on at least one test, with five schools beating the state average on 10 or more. In contrast, the local district fell lower than the state average by 19-37 percentage points on 21 of 27 tests.
- Charters in Lansing surpassed their local peers on all 6<sup>th</sup>-, 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade tests, including by 19 points in 8<sup>th</sup>-grade reading and writing.
- Grand Rapids’ charters posted stronger results than the local district on all 27 tests; on all but three, the gap was 20 - 34 percentage points. Further, most of Kent County’s charters had multiple scores above state average — of 12 K-8 charters, four topped the state on all tests and two others were above on 26.
- In Genesee County, seven of eight charters serving upper middle school had greater proficiency than the local district in nearly all 7<sup>th</sup>- and 8<sup>th</sup>-grade subjects.

Latest MEAP results show a notably strong performance among charter school students in the state’s “subgroups” — black, Hispanic, economically disadvantaged and students with disabilities.

In comparison to the 18 host districts identified by the Michigan Department of Education to be home to a majority of the state’s charters and thus a fair comparison to charter averages, charter students:

- with disabilities outperform their peers by 6 to 15 percentage points in the 5 subjects tested;
- who are Hispanic outperform their peers by 6 to 12 percentage points in each subject;
- who are economically disadvantaged outperform their peers by 2 to 7 points;
- who are black outperform their peers by 2 to 7 points in math, reading, writing and social studies.

“This academic success — topping state averages, closing achievement gaps, succeeding in Michigan’s urban centers — affirms the reason parents, educators and community leaders first created charter schools 12 years ago. It’s also affirms that charters are a vital piece of the solution as the state works to reinvigorate its entire system of public education,” said Dan Quisenberry, president of the Michigan Association of Public School Academies.

Quisenberry said the results will help push charter enrollments past 100,000 this fall, with Michigan being one of just six states at or near that mark.

“Families of all walks of life are choosing charters because they want their children to excel,” he said. “Charters are vastly popular in urban settings nationwide, often because parents feel like their children finally have a fighting chance to do well in school.”

He pointed to schools like David Ellis Academy in Detroit, which exceeded the state average on 16 of 27 tests, and YMCA Service Learning Academy, which topped the state on 14 — both continuing a record of high achievement. Martin Luther King Jr. Education Center, which goes through 6<sup>th</sup> grade only, was better than the state average on 15 of 18 tests — including four perfect 100% proficient scores.

In Flint, the Academy of Flint scored 80% or better on seven tests, including 100% proficient in 3<sup>rd</sup>-grade reading. The International Academy of Flint had nine tests in the 80-90% proficient range.

In Lansing, Windemere Park Charter Academy surpassed the local district on all tests, including by 15-30 percentage points on 16. The school beat the state average on 25 of the 27 tests.

“Just a few years ago, many education leaders in this state railed at the idea of being required to have 25 percent of their students proficient in basic skill areas. Charter school leaders said 25 percent was unacceptable because it was the bare minimum,” Quisenberry said. “With the current test results, charter educators are helping to show just how much our students and schools can achieve.”

To access charts and graphs depicting various views of charter schools MEAP results, go to [www.charterschools.org](http://www.charterschools.org).